



## Ukraine

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

### **International Religious Freedom Report 2009**

**October 26, 2009**

The Constitution and the law on freedom of conscience provide for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the reporting period. Local officials at times took sides in disputes between religious organizations, and property restitution problems remained; however, the Government continued to facilitate the return of some communal properties.

There were reports of societal abuse and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, including cases of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism. Various religious organizations continued their work to draw the Government's attention to their issues, resolve differences between various denominations, and discuss relevant legislation.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and raise concerns about anti-Semitism. U.S. Embassy representatives also raised concerns about anti-Semitism with local officials and promoted ethnic and religious tolerance through public outreach events.

#### Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 233,000 square miles and a population of 45.7 million. The Government estimated there are 33,000 religious organizations representing 55 denominations in the country.

According to official government sources, Orthodox Christian organizations make up 52 percent of the country's religious groups. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate, abbreviated as UOC-MP) is the largest group, with significant presence in all regions of the country except for the Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, and Ternopil oblasts (regions). The UOC-MP is officially registered as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The second largest Orthodox group is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), with most followers located in western and some central oblasts. The UOC-MP does not recognize the UOC-KP. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) is the smallest of the three Orthodox churches, with approximately 70 percent of its adherents in the western part of the country.

Adherents of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) constitute the country's largest non-Orthodox religious group and the largest one in the western part of the country. UGCC members number approximately 4 million, with 93.5 percent located in the western regions. While members of the three Orthodox churches comprise a majority of believers in the western part of the country overall, the Greek Catholic communities constitute a majority in three of the eight western oblasts: Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil.

Some Muslim leaders estimate there are 2 million Muslims in the country, although estimates by the Government and independent think tanks put the number at 500,000. The majority are Crimean Tatars, numbering an estimated

300,000 and constituting the third-largest ethnic group in Crimea. The Crimean Tatars have their own governing council (Crimean Tatar Mejlis) and language (Crimean Tatar). Crimea's majority ethnic Russian population is predominantly affiliated with the UOC-MP.

The Roman Catholic Church, with approximately one million adherents, is traditionally associated with citizens of Polish ancestry, who live mainly in the central and western regions.

According to the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions, 30 percent of the country's religious communities are Protestant. The Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine (the Baptist Union) is the largest Protestant group, claiming more than 300,000 members and more than 2,700 churches.

Other communities include Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutherans, Jews, Anglicans, Calvinists, Methodists, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Presbyterians, Buddhists, and adherents of Krishna Consciousness.

Based on a 2001 census, the State Committee of Statistics estimated there are 103,600 persons of ethnic Jewish origin in the country. Some Jewish community leaders, however, estimate that 170,000 citizens were born to a Jewish mother and as many as 370,000 are eligible to immigrate to Israel because of their Jewish heritage.

A 2007 survey by the independent think tank Razumkov Center found that 40 percent of respondents consider themselves believers not belonging to any denomination, while 37 percent consider themselves believers of a particular religious organization. Of the latter group, 33 percent affiliated themselves with the UOC-KP, 31 percent with the UOC-MP, 18 percent with the UGCC, and 2.5 percent with the UAOC. Less than 5 percent of those surveyed declared themselves Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, or Jews.

According to the 2007 survey, of those who considered themselves believers of a particular religious group, 34 percent said they attend religious services one to two times per year; 23 percent once in several months; 14 percent one to three times per month; 9 percent once per week; 2 percent several times per week; 6 percent once in several years; and 9 percent almost never. The survey also showed that almost 90 percent of religiously active citizens are Christians, the majority Orthodox, and that religious practice is generally strongest in the western part of the country.

According to an opinion poll conducted jointly by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and the Sociology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences in October 2008, the level of public trust in religious institutions is higher than in Parliament, the business sector, and the educational and judicial systems.

## Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

### Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution and the law on freedom of conscience contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no formal state religion; however, in certain regions of the country smaller religious groups complained of unequal treatment by local authorities. In some areas of the center and south, Roman Catholics, UGCC members, and Muslims made such complaints. Conversely, in some western regions and the Sumy Oblast, local authorities at times were reluctant to address concerns of the UOC-MP.

The UOC-MP and major Protestant denominations expressed concern over President Yushchenko's continued efforts to encourage the UOC-MP and UOC-KP to overcome the differences between the two largest Orthodox communities.

They and other religious groups believed unification to be a matter better resolved by the churches themselves.

The Government observes numerous religious holidays, including Christmas, Easter Monday, and Holy Trinity Day, all according to the Julian calendar shared by the Orthodox churches and the Greek Catholics.

The law allows alternative nonmilitary service for conscientious objectors and bans the creation of religious organizations in military institutions and military units.

The law requires religious groups to register either as a local or a national organization and to have at least ten adult members to obtain the status of a "juridical entity." Registration is necessary to conduct many business activities, including publishing, banking, and property transactions. By law the registration process should take one month, or three months if the Government requests an expert opinion on the group's legitimacy. Registration denials may be appealed in court. The Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and the Law on the State Registration of Legal Entities and Private Individuals contain contradictory provisions complicating registration of religious organizations. Despite repeated calls by the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Parliament had not resolved the matter at the end of the reporting period.

The State Committee on Nationalities and Religions (SCNR) administers the registration process. Representatives from several denominations expressed satisfaction with the work done by the SCNR during the reporting period. On April 15, 2009, the SCNR, leaders of the Spiritual Directorate of Crimean Muslims, Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine "Umma," and the Religious Directorate of Independent Muslim Communities of Ukraine formed the Council of Representatives of Spiritual Directorates and Centers of Muslims of Ukraine. The Council is an advisory institution designed to promote dialogue between Muslim organizations and the Government.

The law restricts the activities of foreign-based religious organizations and narrowly defines the permissible activities of members of the clergy, preachers, teachers, and other noncitizen representatives of foreign-based religious organizations; however, there were no reports that the Government used the law to limit the activity of such religious organizations. Religious worker visas require invitations from registered religious organizations in the country and government approval. Foreign religious workers may preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other religious activities "only in those religious organizations that invited them to the country and with official approval of the governmental body that registered the statutes and the articles of the pertinent religious organization." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints expressed concern about new procedures, which it claims limited foreign travel for foreign religious workers residing in the country. According to the church, foreign religious workers who had legally extended their visa to stay beyond the initial 90-day period experienced difficulties with the State Border Guards when reentering the country. The SCNR explained there had been no change in visa policy or intent to discriminate against foreign religious workers. According to the Government, no visa applications by foreign religious workers were rejected during the reporting period.

By law, religion cannot be part of the public school curriculum. Members of the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations continued to support amending the law to allow religious organizations to own and operate private educational institutions where, in addition to secular curriculum, students would be brought up according to the religious values of the founding religious organization.

On October 20, 2008, the Ministry of Science and Education formed a Civil Council for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Organizations. The advisory council, including representatives of religious organizations and experts, discussed ways to enhance the Ministry's dialogue with religious organizations, adopt legislative amendments, and grant full state recognition to theology as an academic discipline.

There were more tangible results from the 2005 presidential decree to introduce "ethics of faith" training courses

into public school curriculums. Its nationwide implementation was initially haphazard and was further delayed because of lack of necessary legislation and concerns raised by Jewish and Muslim leaders that training courses were based on Christian teachings. In June 2009 the Ministry of Education and Science reported an increase in the number of secondary schools offering their students optional courses in Fundamentals of Christian Ethics, Fundamentals of Religious Ethics, and Fundamentals of the Islamic Culture of the Crimea.

According to the law, registered religious organizations maintain a privileged status as the only organizations permitted to seek restitution of communal property confiscated by the Soviet regime. Communities must apply to regional authorities for property restitution. While consideration of a restitution claim should be completed within a month, it frequently takes much longer.

On January 15, 2009, the Parliament adopted legislative amendments that give registered religious organizations the right to permanently use state-owned and communally-owned land plots, on par with the rights of state-owned and communally-owned enterprises, NGOs, and organizations of disabled people.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the reporting period.

The Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine reported some difficulties with registering new religious communities in Crimea due to what it considered the political bias of some local authorities.

UOC-MP representatives reported that in April 2009 the UOC-KP illegally gained ownership of the Transfiguration Church in Beyeve village, Sumy Oblast, after the village's farm director unilaterally decided the church should belong to the UOC-KP. The director attributed his decision to the fact that he personally did not like the UOC-MP priest. UOC-KP representatives denied the charge.

Mejlis members and Crimea-based human rights groups continued to criticize the Crimean government for permitting schools to use textbooks that contained inflammatory and historically inaccurate material about Crimean Tatar Muslims despite government promises to address their concerns.

Crimean Tatars claimed discrimination by mainly ethnic Russian officials in Crimea deprived them of employment in local administrations. They also alleged propaganda campaigns, particularly by so-called Russian Cossacks, promoted hostility against them among other inhabitants of Crimea. In the case of incidents involving Crimean Tatars, in which ethnicity and religion are often inextricably linked, it is difficult to categorize many incidents specifically as ethnic or religious intolerance.

Religious organizations, including members of the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, complained their organizations did not receive exemption from paying value-added taxes despite requests for a more favorable status.

The UOC-MP and UGCC expressed concern that the law provides no possibility for granting "legal entity" status to national religious associations. The lack of such status can complicate ownership claims of church properties when congregations change denominations. The UOC-KP, however, did not see a need for the granting of legal entity status to religious organizations in future legislation.

Members of numerous communities described difficulties in dealing with the municipal administrations in Kyiv and other large cities to obtain land and building permits or to rent office space. These problems were not limited to religious groups, however, and in many cases could be attributed to financial reasons rather than bias against a

particular religious community.

UOC-KP representatives reported Kyiv's local government gave to the UOC- MP more land plots for church construction than to the UOC-KP.

The Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ) in Lviv continued to call on the city administration to provide legal protections for the city's former "Ture Zahav" synagogue and surrounding historical structures. The city stated it was waiting on the findings of an archeological study to verify the structures' historical authenticity.

On September 2, 2008, the Jewish community in Vinnytsya reached an agreement with the city administration over the excavation of a building foundation on the site of a former Jewish cemetery in the city. The city implemented the reburial of the human remains exposed by the digging. The Jewish community, however, called for the city to implement the mayor's promise to construct a fence around the cemetery to better protect the site.

UOC-MP representatives in Lviv Oblast continued to complain that local governments in Stryi, Zhydachiv, Mykolayiv, and Pustomyty refused to allocate land for church construction. UOC-MP representatives in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast stated that local authorities in Dolyna had not issued an approval to the parish of St. John the Baptist for the construction of a church.

The Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine complained that although the municipal government of Kyiv designated burial space for Muslims in a city cemetery, Christian burials had occurred on the designated land plot and the Muslim community did not have adequate burial space.

In August 2008 the Jewish community reiterated previous complaints that the open-air Krakivskiy Market in Lviv was located on the grounds of an ancient Jewish cemetery and that periodic digging to erect market kiosks disturbed the sanctity of the site. They called on the city to relocate the market. The city offered to construct a memorial park on the remaining undeveloped part of the cemetery in 2010 but explained it could not relocate the market because some of the buildings at the market were private property.

UGCC representatives complained the Yalta Municipal Council refused to finalize the allocation of a land plot for the construction of what would be the only Greek Catholic church in the city. They also reported reluctance of municipal governments in Kyiv, Kyiv Oblast, Simferopol, Yevpatoriya, and Zhytomyr to allocate land for church construction.

Muslim representatives in Simferopol criticized the local city council for its refusal to allocate land for the construction of a new central mosque. On April 30, 2009, President Yushchenko signed a degree instructing the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to facilitate resolution of the land issue. The Simferopol City Council continued to delay resolution of the issue.

Restitution of communal property confiscated by the Soviet regime remained a problem. The slow pace of restitution was partly a reflection of the country's budgetary situation, which limited funds available to relocate occupants of seized religious property. In addition, restitution claims for the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities were complicated by intracommunal competition for particular properties. The SCNR declared that the majority of buildings and objects already had been returned to religious organizations and that restitution of many remaining confiscated properties was complicated by the fact that they were occupied by state institutions, were historic landmarks, or had been transferred to private ownership. The SCNR cited a lack of government funding to help relocate the organizations occupying these buildings. The SCNR also noted restitution claims frequently fall under the jurisdiction of local governments.

Some observers expressed concern about the effectiveness and the transparency of the Interagency Commission on Restitution of Property to Religious Organizations. All major religious organizations called on the Government to

establish a transparent legal process to address restitution claims. The All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations continued to call on Parliament to impose a moratorium on the privatization and sale of previously confiscated religious buildings in state and communal ownership, but Parliament did not adopt such legislation. The Government also noted that the slow rate of construction of new houses of worship could not match a steady 2 to 3 percent annual increase in the number of religious communities.

According to the SCNR, in 2008 religious communities were granted either ownership of or the right to use 195 premises (i.e., buildings or sections of buildings). The premises were either originally designated as or later used as places of worship.

The Karaite community in Kyiv continued to demand the return of a "kenesa" building (place of worship), used as the "Actor's House" since the Soviet era. According to the SCNR, the Kyiv Municipal Council had no intention of returning the property.

Representatives of the Religious Union for Progressive Jewish Congregations of Ukraine complained of continued property restitution difficulties with the Kharkiv and Kyiv municipal governments.

At the end of the reporting period, the Government had not transferred ownership of St. Nicholas' Cathedral and a former bishops' residence in Kyiv to the Roman Catholic Church. It permitted, however, the Church to use the cathedral for daily morning mass, on weekends, and during major religious holidays. Church representatives also expressed frustration about unrealized restitution claims of buildings formerly belonging to St. Oleksander's Church in Kyiv, which they stated were improperly privatized in the 1990s, as well as properties in Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Mykolayiv, Odesa, Sevastopol, and Simferopol.

The Roman Catholic Community in Dnipropetrovsk complained a private company had illegally gained ownership of the St. Joseph Church in 1998 in the city and had damaged it during a demolition project in 2008. They called for the Government to facilitate return of the building to the community. On June 25, 2009, the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Economic Court declared the St. Joseph parish a legitimate owner of the St. Joseph Church and ordered the company to transfer the church building to the parish. According to parish representatives, the municipal government acted as the third party in the court proceedings, facilitating return of the church.

UGCC representatives said authorities in Lviv had not returned premises adjacent to St. George's Cathedral. Local officials declared the Government did not have the money to resettle more than a dozen families residing there since the Soviet era.

Odesa's Presbyterian community claimed it continued to have difficulties occupying its historic church building because local and regional courts continued to refuse to implement a higher court's decision to evict the actors' guild, which has occupied part of the building since the Soviet era. In May 2008 the Presbyterian community requested that the European Court of Human Rights hear the case. At the end of the reporting period, the court had accepted but not decided the case.

The UOC-MP and UOC-KP continued to disagree concerning the Holy Trinity Church in Rokhmaniv Village, Shumsk District, Ternopil Oblast, despite an August 2006 ruling by the High Administrative Court that the UOC-MP parish was a legitimate user of the church.

The Yazlovets Village Council in Ternopil Oblast refused to implement the Ternopil Oblast State Administration's 2002 decision to return ownership of a local Roman Catholic convent to the Roman Catholic Church. On October 7, 2008, the Lviv Appellate Administrative Court upheld the convent's ownership rights to the building.

According to Roman Catholic representatives in Odesa, the Government continued to refuse to facilitate the

restitution of Odesa's Roman Catholic seminary, which was confiscated by the Soviet regime.

Representatives of the Muslim community noted the slow pace of communal property restitution. Muslim community leaders complained in particular about unresolved restitution claims involving a 118-year-old mosque in Mykolayiv, a famed mosque in Dnipropetrovsk, a 150-year-old mosque in the Crimean town of Masandra, a mosque in Yalta, and the ruins of an 18th-century mosque in the Crimean coastal city of Alushta.

In February 2007 the Zhytomyr Oblast Archives, with the approval of the National Archives, ordered the seizure of Torah scrolls belonging to the Jewish community in Zhytomyr. In March and April 2009, fragments of Torah scrolls, most of them beyond repair, were returned to the Jewish community. At the end of the reporting period, the majority of usable Torah scrolls remained with the National Archives.

#### Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no updates on the November 2007 incident reported by the Missionary Evangelical Center Word of Life, in which an unidentified man accompanying policemen threatened the center's representatives with a pistol while carrying out a court-ordered eviction in Kyiv and in which police had threatened observers with imprisonment if they publicized the incident.

There were no new developments in the August 2007 armed police raid on a Pentecostal church in Yevpatoria during services.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

#### Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States or who had not been allowed to be returned to the United States.

#### Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On June 10, 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a resolution permitting the UOC-KP use of the St. Michael's Cathedral of the St. Michael's monastery, and the UOC-MP use of the Dormition Cathedral of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra for daily services.

On June 10, 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers approved proposals by the State Property Fund and Lviv Oblast State Administration to return the premises of the former Theological Seminary in Lviv to the Roman Catholic Church.

On April 22, 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers allowed the Patriarchy of the UAOC to use the St. Andrew's Church in Kyiv for daily services.

On April 15, 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a resolution to fund software upgrades to facilitate issuance of foreign travel passports to citizens who refuse to receive a personal tax identification number because of their religious views.

On March 25, 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers reduced rental rates for religious organizations using state-owned property to 45 percent of rental fees charged to commercial entities. The reduction is effective until January 1, 2010.

At the synagogue in Lutsk, the local government responded to credible security concerns by constructing a fence

around the building and giving ownership of the building to the Jewish community, which had formerly been leased.

In April 2009 the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast State Administration issued a resolution to return the Holy Trinity Cathedral to the UOC-MP.

On January 15, 2009, the Parliament adopted legislative amendments giving registered religious organizations the right to permanently use state-owned and communally-owned land plots.

The SCNR, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Border Guard Committee, State Customs Service, State Committee for Tourism, and other agencies, cooperated to support Jewish pilgrimages to the burial site in Uman of Rabbi Nakhman Tsadyk, founder of the Bratslav Hasidic movement. According to the SCNR, more than 15,000 Hasidim from 20 countries traveled to Uman in September 2008. Growing numbers of Jewish pilgrims have been visiting burial sites of prominent spiritual leaders in Medzhybizh, Berdychiv, and Hadyach.

### Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were a number of acts of violence against persons and property based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Anti-Semitic violence continued to be a problem and was part of an overall increase in violent hate crimes during the reporting period. According to the Congress of Ethnic Communities and Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine (Vaad), there were four victims of three anti-Semitic incidents in 2008 with no deaths.

On September 13, 2008, a group of youths shouting anti-Semitic abuse assaulted Vinnytsya Rabbi Shaul Horovitz, his young son, and a friend. Police arrested the attackers. A local court ordered the attackers to pay a fine for committing an act of "hooliganism."

There were several incidents involving hate speech against Jewish persons and institutions as well as against other groups.

Churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and memorials were vandalized on several occasions. In July 2008 Crimean police detained three students on charges of Christian cemetery desecration. From April 2007 to March 2008, the suspects committed eight acts of vandalism at a cemetery in the Simferopol District.

On June 17, 2009, Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko directed the police to conduct more thorough investigations into cases of cemetery vandalism. From January to June 2009, police recorded 619 incidents of cemetery vandalism, said the Minister.

On May 25, 2009, unidentified attackers painted swastikas on the walls of the Jewish Charity Center in Feodosia. Representatives of the Center attributed lack of progress in investigation of the case to lax attitude of local police toward previous anti-Semitic incidents.

On May 6, 2009, unidentified offenders set fire to the St. Olga Church of the UOC-KP in Mariupol. Police continued to investigate the incident.

On May 1, 2009, unidentified vandals set fire to the entrance door of the UOC-MP Church in Mezhyrich Village, Sumy Oblast. Authorities were investigating the incident.

On April 7, 2009, vandals destroyed a cross installed by UOC-KP representatives at the site of future reconstruction



of the Dormition Church in Okhtyrka.

On February 19, 2009, unidentified attackers overturned a cross installed at the entrance to the St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church in Dnipropetrovsk.

On February 8, 2009, vandals painted antireligious graffiti on the walls of the Transfiguration Cathedral of the UOC-MP in Pryluky, Chernihiv Oblast. In March police detained four suspects.

On December 4, 2008, vandals smashed windows in a synagogue in Rivne. The vandals were not identified, and the police investigation was ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

On October 15, 2008, a group smashed the windows of the offices to the Jewish Agency in Chernihiv. The police investigation was ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

Anti-Semitic articles appeared frequently in small publications and irregular newsletters, although such articles rarely appeared in the national press. The Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP, which in previous years had accounted for nearly 90 percent of the country's anti-Semitic print media), sharply reduced its output. Researchers recorded 53 anti-Semitic publications in major print media outlets in 2008, compared to 542 in 2007. The Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine attributed the sharp decrease to several factors, including political, administrative and social pressure on MAUP by NGOs, political parties, politicians, and the Government; that MAUP lost a large number of court cases; and the loss of potential students due to MAUP's deteriorating reputation.

Jewish community leaders in Kherson repeatedly complained that Serhiy Kyrychenko, a member of the city council, was spreading anti-Semitic propaganda. Kyrychenko made frequent appearances on the local radio show "Vik," accusing Jews of robbing the Ukrainian people and plotting to enslave Ukrainians and exterminate Slavs.

In the summer of 2008, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) exposed a plot by a group of ultra-right extremists led by a former policeman in Kirovograd to blow up Kirovograd's Choral Synagogue. Representatives of the local SBU branch stated leaders of the group studied literature on Nazi Germany and Hitler and planned to attack local Jews. The group also was reported to have planned to assault foreigners. Members of the group were detained but later released after law enforcement officials threatened to prosecute further criminal activity. On October 7, 2008, the media reported the SBU forwarded the case to the Kirovohrad prosecutor's office for further investigation.

In February 2009 an improvised explosive device was found in a synagogue in Lutsk. Investigators determined the device contained explosives but was not wired to detonate. The Jewish community called for a full investigation.

On November 22, 2008, representatives of the Poltava Oblast Society of Soviet Political Prisoners and the Repressed erected seven wooden crosses on land in Poltava designated for a synagogue. According to the group, the crosses were erected to commemorate the anniversary of the Stalin-era famine, and they did not know the land was intended for construction of a synagogue. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Segal stated the act was a provocation intended to stir religious hatred in the city. The Poltava Mayor's Office described the act as unauthorized and illegal.

The UOC-KP and UAOC continued to dispute ownership of the St. George Church in Odesa. This dispute resulted from an archpriest's change of affiliation from the UOC-KP to the UAOC.

UOC-MP supporters in Chernihiv continued to protest the Chernihiv Oblast State Administration's 2006 decision to transfer the St. Catherine Church (which had been used as a museum) to the UOC-KP. In December 2008 the Chernihiv Municipal Council attempted to ease the social and religious tensions surrounding the issue by banning

transfer of the building to the UOC-KP and ordering that the church remain a museum.

The Government continued to promote interfaith understanding by frequently consulting with the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, which represents more than 90 percent of the religiously active population. In April 2009 the Ministry of Defense and major religious groups formed the Council for Pastoral Support. The Health Ministry's Civic Council for Cooperation with the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations held its inaugural meeting on June 4, 2009.

#### Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government and religious leaders as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

The U.S. Ambassador, embassy officers, and officials in Washington maintained ongoing dialogue with government and religious leaders and stayed in close contact with clerics, lay religious leaders, and NGOs that promote religious freedom. The Embassy tracked developments in religious freedom and cultural heritage preservation, including the status of Jewish cemeteries in Lviv, Uman, and Volodymyr-Volynsky, and monitored cases involving discrimination against Tatars in Crimea. U.S. government officials raised concerns over religious freedom and anti-Semitism with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Prosecutor General, Office of the Prime Minister, Presidential Secretariat, and local officials. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials, including the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, also raised concerns directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet of Ministers, Ministry of Science and Education, and the country's Embassy in Washington about the anti-Semitic teachings and publications of MAUP. The Ambassador and other embassy officers met with members of the Crimean Tatar community to hear their concerns.

Throughout the reporting period, the Ambassador raised the broader topics of communal property restitution and cultural heritage preservation in meetings and correspondence with government officials at the highest levels. The Embassy met with the deputy mayor of Lviv to inquire regarding complaints of hotel construction on the site of the city's former synagogue (which was destroyed during the Holocaust), possible destruction of remaining historic buildings, and the status of the historic Jewish cemetery located on the grounds of the Krakivskiy Market.

The Ambassador met with leaders of the Jewish and Islamic communities, and embassy officers met with religious leaders in Kyiv, Odesa, and Crimea to better understand these communities' concerns.

Embassy officers continued to maintain close contact not only with clerics but also with lay leaders in religious communities and representatives of faith-based social service organizations, such as Caritas, the American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the NCSJ. The Embassy continued to intervene as necessary to defend foreign religious workers' rights to due process under the law.